Building Security: Connected Parents, Connected Families

Presented by:
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Building Security: Connected parents, connected families

• **The lens of attachment theory**: Human beings are social & emotional creatures designed to turn to each other to ensure our survival from the cradle to the grave.
  – What does attachment mean, and how do our human needs for attachment “show up” in day to day interactions?

• **How attachment needs evolve in adult romantic relationships**

• **The role of emotions in relationships and how they both block, and create the possibility for security with our partner**
  – The way we regulate our own emotions is directly related to how we respond to the emotions of others
  – Learning to trust the wisdom of emotions

• **Getting better at connecting!**
  – Taking care of your relationship with your partner
  – Parallels taking care of yourself and your relationship with your children
Takeaways for tonight

My hopes for this presentation are:

• It starts a conversation between you and your partner

• It gives you a humanistic lens to see yourself, your partner, and your children

• Gives you a starting point to begin practicing ways to build emotional security in your most important relationships
Hidden in plain sight:
A crash course in Attachment Theory!
A road map for understanding attachment needs

CIRCLE OF SECURITY

PARENT ATTENDING TO THE CHILD'S NEEDS

Support My Exploration

Welcome My Coming To You

Secure Base

- Protect me
- Comfort me
- Delight in me
- Organize my feelings

Safe Haven

- Watch over
- Delight in me
- Help me
- Enjoy with me

I need you to...

Always: be BIGGER, STRONGER, WISER, and KIND.
Whenever possible: follow my child's need.
Whenever necessary: take charge.

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The dance of attachment: How it looks in adults
Similarities in adult love relationships and parent/child relationships

- Desire for attention
- Desire for responsiveness
- Desire to share things (i.e. reciprocal interest)
- Desire for physical closeness & contact seeking (affection, comfort, soothing, etc.)
- More confident and secure when the other is perceived as dependable
- Become anxious, pre-occupied, and unable to concentrate when attachment figure is rejecting or distant
- Prolonged eye contact
- Non-verbal communication – cooing and singing to one another
Differences in adult attachment relationships

• Adult love relationships are more **representational** - adults can carry loved ones in our minds for comfort and reassurance

• Adult relationships are sexual – sexuality is a bonding/attachment behavior

• Adult relationships are reciprocal in nature vs. a parent-child relationships where the parent takes the lead in the attachment relationship with a child

• Circle of Security in Adults? Many aspects of the Circle are the same (ex. Husband’s art show)

• The ebb and flow of **emotional** Connection & Disconnection; Rupture and Repair; Understanding and Misunderstanding as we each “explore” our internal experiences
Attachment in adult love relationships: Why is it so hard?
“We can’t communicate”

Most commonly stated reason for relationship distress is “we can’t communicate”

*Translation*: Talking to you is terribly painful because.....

- You don’t respond to me
- I feel like I don’t matter to you
- I feel like I am never good enough for you
- I feel alone
- I feel like you aren’t there for me when I need you
What drives relationship distress?

• Unrepaired emotional disconnection
• Fear of our own needs, and fear of being seen by our partner
• Phobias of certain (or all) emotions
• The 4 D’s! (Johnson, 2012)
  – “If I become open and vulnerable, I’ll find that I’m…..”
    • Defective
    • Disintegrating
    • Drowning
    • Dismissed
Adult love relationships:  
How do we get better at connecting?
5 Habits for building emotional security!

1. Understand your Emotional Landscape
2. Self-validation
3. Accurate expression
4. Partner validation
5. Make and accept relationship repairs
Final thoughts: Building security

• Attachment Theory: We’re born this way!
  – “Tune in” to the attachment channel – the music in the background
• Notice the attachment questions that may be driving your difficult feelings or your partner’s difficult feelings
• Practice Compassion for the difficulties that come up between you
  – We are fighting for our lives
• Focus on connecting and reconnecting
• Practice not perfection!!